coupled with higher domestic consumption and export demand for Indian Tea.

(c) In order to check the rise in prices of Tea the Government has taken various steps which include (i) directive of the Tea Board to the producers for strict compliance with the provisions of Tea Marketing (Control) Order, 1984 (ii) relaxation of policy regarding sale of tea in the Domestic Tariff Area (DTA) by Export Oriented Units and Units in Export Processing (Free Trade Zones for a period of six months upto June, 1998 (iii) supply of Nivendan Tea to the consumers at cheaper prices etc.

Decline in Exports

2040. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have achieved target of exports of various products from the country;

(b) which are the major sectors where the exports have declined;

(c) the main reasons for the decline in exports;

(d) what steps Government have taken to support the balance of exports to imports; and

(e) whether Government have formulated any new policies to control the decline in exports and to protect the economy of the country?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HDGDE): (a) Against a provisional target of US $40800 million for 1998-99, the export value during April-November, 1998-99 was US $ 23074 million (including Computer Software export data from Electronics and Computer Sofotware Export Promotion Council) as per the provisional data from Directorate General of Commerical Intelligence & Statistics.

(b) According to provisional data from Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics (DGCIS), during April-November, 1998-99, exports of agricultural and allied products, marine products, ores and minerals, leather and manufactures, footwear sport goods chemicals and related products, engineering goods electronics (hardware), project goods,.cotton yarn fabrics made-ups, man made textiles made ups, wool and woollen manufactures and Jute manufactures, carpets, cotton raw incl. waste and petroleum products have shown negative growth in dollar terms.

(c) Decline in the rate of exports have premarily been due to South East Asian Currency crisis and world wide recession.

(d) and (e) A number of steps have been taken to promote exports which include lowering of interest rates on export credit, reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation and simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumberated in the Exin Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote export through multilateral and bilateral intiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions. The Government is also initiating action through several measures to facilitate investment in sectors with strong export potential, encourage diversification of India's export basket, address infrastructure short comings, improve export facilitation measures and thus enhance the overall competitiveness of Indian export. The Government is according high priority to exports and all necessary steps are being taken to put exports on high growth trajectory.

Escrow Accounts Facility

2041. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the criteria for granting Escrow Accounts Facility;

(b) the number of countries with which India has such acconting facility; and

(c) the number of business houses and individuals granted this facility during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEDGE): (a) Counter trade proposals involving adjustment of value of goods inported into India against value of goods exports from India in terms of an arrangement voluntarily entered into between the Indian party and the overseas party through an ESCROW account opened in India in US $ are considered by the Reserve Bank of India, US $ ESCROW accounts are permitted to be opened and maintained by the overseas suppliers with banks in India. All imports and exports under the arrangement should be at international prices and all transactions routed through the account should be in comformity with Indian Trade and Exchange Control Regualtions. The balances in the account are not allowed to be remitted outside India. No interest is paid on the balances held in the accoaunt. However the funds rendered temporarily surplus are allowed to be held in short term deposit upto a total period of 3 months in a year and interest thereon can be paid at applicable rate.

(b) US $ ESCROW accounts are maintained by overseas suppliers/organisations or the overseas banks on behalf of their suppliers constituents. As on 28th February 1999 such accounts of parties from 10 countries were being maintained.

(c) As mentioned at (a) above the US $ ESCROW accounts are permitted to be maintained by the overseas suppliers/organisations/banks. The number of US $ ESCROW accounts permitted during the last three years was 37, comprising of 8 accounts of overseas suppliers/organistions and 29 accounts of the overseas banks.

Trends in Tobacco Exports

2042. SHRI YEERA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Tobacco Board has been monitoring the trends of export of Indian tobacco;

(b) what are the exports prospects for new varieties of tobacco grown by our farmers?

(c) whether any suggestions have been made by importing countries on different quality of tobacco required;

(d) whether the Tobacco Board has done by any survey of changing export trends overseas; and

(e) if so, the details and indications of the new trends?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEDGE): (a) Yes, Sir. The trends in export of Indian Tobacco for the past few years as monitored by Tobacco Board are as follows:

(Qty. tonnes; Value Rs. Crs.)

Year	Tobacco		Tobacco Products		Total		
	Qty.	Value	Qty.	Value	Qty.	Value	
						Rs.Crs.	M.US$
1994-95	44600	207.83	10822	59.95	55422	267.78	85.29
1995-96	72052	361.36	11883	59.68	83935	421.04	126.06
1996-97	117466	733.66	13115	92.86	130581	862.52	234.32
1997-98	136739	972.83	7795	88.36	144534	1061.19	272.52
1998-99 (Apr-Jan'99)	68484	526.61	16220	138.60	84704	665.21	164.16